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ABSTRACT

This review of the status of English language instruction in France provides an overview of the role of English in the society in general and outlines the status of English in the educational system at the elementary, secondary, higher, and vocational levels. The following topics are covered: instruction in English for special purposes, the characteristics and training of English language instructors, professional associations for English teachers, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English instruction outside the educational system, British, American, and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, creative writing, language research, and other sources of information. Although English has a privileged position among foreign languages in France and demand for instruction is great, the French language is vigorously defended and preserved. Some advances in attitudes toward alternative or new approaches to English instruction are found, especially some encouraging developments in adult education. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: France

Date: MARCH 1986

This should be read in conjuction with the British Council's Education Profile France, October 1985.

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

The role of English in France is similar to that of French in Britain. There are, however, two riders. First, as English is the international language of science and technology, French academics and researchers recognize the need for a working knowledge of written and spoken English for the purposes of research and attendance at international conferences. Secondly, English is increasingly required as a job qualification in commerce and industry with the result that there has been a boom in business English courses in recent years. Even so, English is not generally used, although there are signs that its use is gradually increasing in the tourist industry. Students and even teachers of English who come to our offices in France usually address the staff in French, even if they have come to enquire about keeping up their English.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

English is by far the most studied language in the education system.

Secondary

At this level the study of a foreign language is compulsory in all years. About eighty-three per cent of students in state secondary schools (about 3.7 million in 1984) and about ninety-one per cent of students in government-supported 'private', mainly Catholic, schools study English as their first foreign language.

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Tertiary

In universities, study of a foreign language is compulsory in most faculties in the first two years of undergraduate study and it is estimated that ninety per cent of students opt for English. A similar situation prevails in the university institutes of technology (IUTs) and the Grandes Ecoles. In the latter, English is often compulsory.

Vocational

As in the general education schools, a foreign language is compulsory in all vocational secondary schools; again, over eighty per cent of students opt for English.

Further education

English courses are offered by Centres de Formation Continue located in state universities and IUTs throughout the country. Many of their students come from companies under the Formation Permanente law of 16 July 1971 and from recently established, government-sponsored retraining schemes for the unemployed.

Correspondence courses

These are organized by the Centre National d'Enseignement par Correspondance (CNEC), a state-funded organization with seven centres in France. Two of these centres, at Toulouse and Vanves, offer 'cours de langues' (including English). In addition, correspondence courses in English are offered by at least two French universities and by the British Institute in Paris. The latter, although it is a Senate Institute of the University of London and not formally part of the French education system, is under the 'moral authority' of the Recteur-Chancellier of the University of Paris.

Hours of instruction

Pre-secondary

English is not a required subject at nursery/primary level. However, some schools, particularly in the private sector, include it in response to parental pressure. The number of sessions allocated varies, but rarely exceeds four 30 minute periods per week.

Secondary

In the secondary sector the hours allotted weekly to the compulsory first foreign language are:

Cycle	Class	Hours per week
Premier (11-15+)	6ème	3 hrs and the possibility of i) 1 hr 'soutien' for less able students ii) 2 hrs 'approfondissement' for more able students
	5ème	
	4ème	3 hrs and the possibility of 1-2 hrs 'renforcée'
	3ème	
Second (16-18+)	2nde	3 hrs
	1ere	
	Terminale	2-3 hrs depending on specialization

It is also possible to take a second and a third foreign language (FL) as optional subjects. The hours allotted per week are:

Cycle	Class	Second FL	Third FL
Premier	4ème	3 hrs	
	3ème	3 hrs	
Second	2nde	i) 3 hrs when continued from premier cycle	3 hrs
	1ère	or ii) 5 hrs when started in 2nde	
	Terminale	3 hrs	3 hrs

At tertiary level the number of hours per week varies between universities (where the language studied is not the specialist subject), IUTs and Grandes Ecoles, and within each category. Most institutions offer 2-4 hrs per week.

Literature

In the secondary sector, literature in English is not formally taught. It no longer forms part of the Baccalauréat (Bac) examination, although extracts from literary works are sometimes studied to provide insights into the cultures of English-speaking countries. Such texts are sometimes chosen for the Bac examination. At the tertiary level, literature is not normally studied in the Grandes Ecoles and IUTs. In the universities, however, literary studies are a major part of courses followed by students taking English as their main degree subject (as for students of French in British universities).

Examinations

Secondary: first cycle ages (11-16)

At present there is no examination at the end of the first cycle and no leaving certificate is awarded. The recently deposed socialist government had decided to reintroduce a leaving certificate in which evaluation of performance in foreign languages would be based on continuous assessment with no final written examination. At the time of writing, indications are that the new government will implement this proposal. If so, it will be supervised by the National and Regional Inspectorate.

Secondary: second cycle ages (16-18+)

All candidates taking the Bac sit an examination in at least one foreign language. At present, success in the Bac guarantees entry to university, although early pronouncements of the new government suggest that entry may become more selective. There are two Bac examinations for English, one for the written language (reading and writing), and one for 'oral expression'. Students specializing in lettres (série A) and économie (série B) take both examinations. Students following other courses take the examination in oral expression only. Changes have been made to the format of both examinations. Since 1984, the reading/writing paper has moved away from 'explication de texte' and translation towards reading comprehension and 'use of language'; a writing component has been added. The questions set are similar to those

found in the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) First Certificate in English (FCE)/Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) papers. As from June 1986, the oral examination will be in two parts. The first part (ten minutes) will be the established oral 'interrogation' of a text chosen by the examiner from about twenty prepared by the candidate in advance. The second consists of an interpretation by the candidate of an unseen document followed by discussion (ten minutes). The document may be a written text, a visual image, or an aural text. The Bac examinations are prepared regionally under the supervision of the General and Regional Inspectorate.

University

The form and content of these examinations are determined by the universities themselves, as in the UK. Examinations are taken after two years Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Generales in universities, Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie in IUTs, after three years (Licence) and after four years (Maîtrise).

Grandes Ecoles

Each Grande Ecole has its own final examination in English; in a few, UCLES examinations are compulsory or strongly recommended. In many Grandes Ecoles English is a required component of the curriculum, although it is not always a decisive factor in the awarding of diplomas. The Conférence des Grandes Ecoles recently formed a language-testing research group to set up national objectives for language testing in the Grandes Ecoles and to standardize criteria for the evaluation of these tests. It is hoped that this work will be published late 1986.

Most of the competitive entry examinations (concours) for the Grandes Ecoles include a compulsory English test.

Syllabus/Textbooks

For the secondary system the syllabus is laid down nationally by the Inspection Générale and is published as 'programmes et instructions' by the Ministry of Education. Although guidelines are given on how the syllabus might be taught, the teacher is not compelled to adopt a particular approach.

The choice of textbooks rests with each school and usually reflects the majority view of the English teachers in the school; an inspector has no power to enforce a change of book. Within the Ministry of Education there is a groupe d'étude which evaluates textbooks submitted to it. Critical commentaries on the books are then distributed by the Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique (CNDP) to each school; these commentaries obviously influence teacher choice.

In higher and further education each institution determines its own syllabus. Choice of textbook is often left to the teacher.

Inspection

The system of inspection in the secondary system is powerful and complex. There are officially eight Inspecteurs Généraux for English, headed by a Doyen. Based in Paris, each of them inspects professeurs agrégés et certifiés in three académies. There are forty-four Inspecteurs Pédagogiques Régionaux (IPRs), based in the regions. They too, under the supervision of an Inspecteur Généraux inspect professeurs agrégés et certifiés. They also inspect the Maîtres Auxiliares and teachers in the private secondary schools.

Inspection of the Professeurs d'Enseignement Général des Collèges (PEGC) teachers (who usually teach both English and French) is carried out by the Inspectors of Primary Schools, who are not specialists in English.

The power of the Inspectorate is considerable. Inspections of the nearly 30,000 teachers of English in state secondary schools, of whom about 12,000 are PEGCs, take place at irregular intervals, usually every three or four years. The Inspector is not obliged to notify the teacher of a visit but often chooses to do so. After observing a class (or classes) given by the teacher, the Inspector sends a 'proposed' notation to the Ministry of Paris. This is made up of a 'note pédagogique' (60%) and a 'note administrative' (40%). Complicated statistical operations are performed upon this proposal and eventually the teacher is informed of the revised notation. This is on a scale of 1-20 and affects the teacher's chances of transfer from one post to another and salary level. Small wonder that teachers go in awe of inspectors and are quick to note what the inspector disapproves of.

English for special purposes (ESP)

In the secondary sector there has been little ESP up to now, except in the terminale classes of some technical lycées and in the classes préparatoires of certain lycées which coach students for the concours of the Grandes Ecoles. However, the proposed introduction of a new Baccalauréat d'Enseignement Professionnel incorporating ESP in the English examination could lead to ESP being taught more widely in the lycées professionnel.

In higher education the need for ESP is acknowledged but not always met. In the universities the recently introduced courses in langues étrangères appliquées were intended to relate the study of English to professional needs; as yet there is little evidence that this is happening. However, in some IUTS and Grandes Ecoles (particularly Ecoles de Commerce), there is an awareness of the need to relate the students' English courses to their professional areas of study and future careers.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Supply

The supply of teachers generally outruns the demand. In the secondary sector, since qualified teachers are state functionaries and cannot be dismissed, the state ensures that the number given a qualification does not exceed the number of posts that has to be filled. This is controlled via the competitive examinations (concours) for the Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de Collège d'Enseignement Public du Second Degré (CAPES) and Agrégation. Figures for 1985 for these two examinations were:

Exam	Posts	Candidates	Successful candidates
CAPES	750	3,120	669*
AGRÉGATION	116	1,432	116

*The number of candidates who reached the required minimum standard was lower than the number of available posts. Hence the discrepancy.

Likewise, in the universities competition for poste titulaire (a tenured post) is fierce; the minimum qualification is the Doctorat de 3ème Cycle (no longer offered by the universities), the new Doctorat (equivalent to a Ph.D), or the Agrégation.

Throughout the formal educational system most teachers of English holding tenured posts are French. A few expatriates have managed to requalify in the French system in secondary and tertiary education and are 'titulaires'. However, in the universities relatively large numbers of expatriate 'assistant' teachers are not titulaire and often find themselves, in employment terms, in an extremely precarious position. The same applies to IUTs and Grandes Ecoles. The figures for teachers of English in the secondary sector are:

Sector	Agrégation	CAPES	PEGC	Total
Public	2,032	11,594	11,470	25,096
Private	88	370	4,582	5,040

There are 1,437 tenured teachers of English in the universities.

Qualifications (secondary)

There are three principal groups (or 'corps') of teachers of English in the secondary system as defined by their qualifications. Qualifications affect salary and teaching hours. The three groups are:

PEGC: These teachers have followed a two- or three-year course, depending on entry qualifications, at a Centre de Formation des PEGC annexed to an Ecole Normale (teacher training college). Admission is open to primary school teachers (instituteurs) or candidates who have successfully completed their first year at university. They are frequently required to teach two subjects (usually French and English), generally for twenty-one hours per week. With rare exceptions, PEGC teachers only teach in collèges.

CAPES: Candidates for the CAPES must have a university Licence. The course is in two parts: one year of theoretical studies in university followed by a written examination; and then one year of practical training in a Centre Régional Pédagogique (CRP). During the second year, candidates attend ten to twenty half-day seminars and are attached to a school for teaching practice (usually eight hours per week) and observation. They have a practical examination at the end of the year. 'Capésiens' teach eighteen hours per week, mainly in lycées.

Agrégation: This is the highest level examination for teachers in secondary schools. Candidates must have a Maîtrise or the CAPES, or be students of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS). Once a year, candidates take a number of intellectually demanding examinations. 'Agrégés' who have no previous teaching experience are, in their first year allotted one class of their own and another which is supervised by an experienced teacher (Conseiller Pédagogique). They teach fifteen hours per week, almost exclusively in lycées.

Teacher training

Initial training

None of the systems outlined above constitutes teacher training in the British sense. The French approach is to develop in the teacher a detailed and deep knowledge of the subject; relatively little attention is given to how to teach it. This is particularly true of the Agrégation and CAPES which train the candidates for highly traditional examinations requiring knowledge of literature and 'civilization' and translation skills. Everyone criticizes them, but no one seems prepared to give them up or change them in any meaningful way.

In-service training

This is erratic and lacking in coherence. Centres Regionals de Documentation Pédagogique/Centres Departementals de Documentation Pédagogique (CRDPs/CDDPs) have been the main centres for half- or one-day seminars held on the teachers' day off (Wednesday in most parts of France) and organized by an 'animateur', a teacher who is attached part-time to the CRDPs/CDDPs. Attendance is voluntary. Their role, however, as organizers of such programmes is increasingly passing to the 'Mission Académique' in each of the twenty-six regional educational authorities (Académies), recently created for this purpose. There are already signs that in-service training will improve in quantity, quality and flexibility under the new system.

Other sectors

No formal teacher-training is required for teachers in tertiary or further education. Where it is done, it is organized on request by such bodies as the British Council.

Professional organizations

Association des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (APLV)

Open to state-employed teachers of foreign languages in France, APLV is concerned with both professional and career questions. It organizes an annual week-long conference on a national level and occasional regional conferences and colloquia, the latter often on the teaching of one specific language. APLV publishes the journal Les Langues Modernes. It is considered a rather staid body.

Union des Professeurs de Langues Etrangeres dans les Grands Etablissements Superieurs Scientifiques (UPLEGESS)

UPLEGESS was set up in 1974 to cater for the needs of teachers of all languages in the Grandes Ecoles. It has a special interest in ESP and organizes an annual conference. It publishes Echanges Pédagogiques jointly with the Equipe de Recherches Pédagogiques IUT.

Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches pour l'Anglais de Spécialité (GERAS)

Set up in 1977 to cater for teachers of ESP in the University sector, GERAS is a suborganization of the SAES (see below). It holds at least one major colloquium per year. So far it has no journal.

Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur (SAES)

This is the university English teachers' organization and is mainly concerned with literary studies and university politics. It has an annual congress and publishes the journal Etudes Anglaises.

Association des Professeurs de Langues des Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (APLIUT)

Set up in 1977, APLIUT fulfills a similar function to UPLEGESS, representing the career interests of teachers of all foreign languages in IUTs as well as providing a forum for professional exchange and development. It organizes an annual conference and publishes the journal Les Cahiers d'APLIUT.

TESOL France

Set up in 1981, TESOL France is open to teachers of English from all educational sectors, public and private. It is a French association but despite much effort to attract more French members, the membership (some 350) is predominantly expatriate. A recent drive to attract French teachers from the secondary sector may redress the balance. TESOL France holds an annual convention and a series of seminars in Paris, and has started a series of regional days for secondary school teachers in the provinces. It publishes the proceedings of the convention and the journal TESOL France News.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

There is no shortage of teaching material at any level, whether locally published or imported. A wide range of imported (including British) materials is available in most major cities or can be ordered without too much delay.

In the secondary sector a wide range of books is in use, mostly locally published. In the first cycle (collèges) the most commonly used books are:

Imagine You're English. Gibbs et al. Belin.
Speak English. Benhamou et al. Nathan.
Let's Go. Gautier et al. Armand Colin.

These books account for over seventy per cent of the market. Other titles include:

Hunter Street. Humbley et al. Hachette.
It's Up to You. Capelle et al. Hachette.
OK. Lacoste et al. Nathan.

New titles which have yet to make an impact on the market are:

Hello. Asselineau et al. Hatier.
Channel 6. Gibbs et al. Belin.

In the second cycle (lycées), the most commonly used books are:

Let's Go On. Poujade et al. Armand Colin.
Making Sense. Capelle et al. Hachette.
Say What You Mean. Grémy et al. Nathan

Other books used in the second cycle include:

Imagine You're English. Gibbs et al. Belin.
Today. Hardin et al. Hachette.
Highway. Humbley et al. Hachette.

With the introduction of the revised Bac, several new titles are likely to appear on the market soon. As far as British ELT materials are concerned, their use always has been sporadic and limited in the secondary sector. However small inroads have been made recently by Strategies, Breakaway, Visa and, in technical schools, Checkpoint. Also, with the changes in the Bac, interest is being shown in British materials for oral expression and for the UCLES exams.

Software

Audio material

Wide use is made of listening material in all sectors. Books used in the secondary system usually have accompanying tapes. In the tertiary sector and in 'Formation Continue', language labs are fairly common. At these levels much use is made of British published material.

Video

Most secondary schools have video equipment but few teachers of English use it. Those who do, generally fail to exploit the medium effectively. It is more widely and effectively used in the tertiary sector and in Formation Continue. British material is popular.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

There is great interest in CALL in France. As a result of government policy most schools now have microcomputers and they are widely available in the post-secondary sector. There is relatively little locally produced software for English, although this is changing. What exists is uninspiring. British material has stimulated a lot of interest, but is not compatible with most of the equipment used in French institutions. This should improve with the introduction of the proposed 'European' standard for hardware.

Literature

Numerous works from English literature, including contemporary writing, are available in translation.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

See Sections 7 and 9 of Education Profile France, October 1985.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The reader is referred to Section 9 (pp.29-32) of the Education Profile France, October 1985.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The teaching of foreign languages to adults was given a boost by the law of

16 July 1971 on the Formation Permanente. This requires all firms above a certain size to contribute one per cent of their annual wage bill for the continuing education of employees. Teaching languages was one of the obvious ways of using up this money and many schools and groupings of teachers grew up to take advantage of the boom. In recent years, however, as unemployment has increased and company training needs have changed, employers have diversified their use of the money, trade unions have demanded a bigger share of it for other training projects, and the government has become more watchful. There is, notwithstanding, an enormous, complex and virtually unchartable system of private and semi-private teaching. The organizations undertaking this kind of work fall into these divisions:

Private language schools, e.g. International Language Centre

Independent groups of teachers on a cost/profit sharing basis, e.g. Association pour la Creativité et la Recherche dans l'Enseignement de l'Anglais (ACREA)

Big company schools, e.g. Rhône-Poulenc, Air France

Educational institutions with a 'formation' department, e.g. IUT de Paris

There is also much private teaching on a one-to-one basis.

The English taught varies from recreational/general purpose to very specific, such as preparing doctors to take part in an international medical congress.

BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The British Council ELT staff in Paris comprises one English Language Officer and two English Teaching Advisers. No British teachers are contracted through the Consul. However, there is a large number of British 'assistants' in French secondary schools each year (1,640 in 1985/86) and a few British exchange teachers (70 in 1985/86). Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges (CBEVE) is responsible for both groups.

It is not possible to give accurate figures for other British nationals in France on the staff of universities, Grandes Ecoles, private language schools, etc.; there are probably well over a thousand.

Direct teaching

There is no direct teaching in the British Council in Paris, but the British Institute, with which it shares its premises, is almost wholly a direct-teaching institute. The British Institute has forty teachers of English (twenty-two tenured and eighteen non-tenured) and about 2,800 students of English.

British Council activity

British Council staff in France are concerned mainly with:

diffusion of information on ELT

loan of materials

organization and running of teacher-training courses.

(For details refer to the appendices to the annual report for France.)

British specialists

In addition to Britons working in ELT in France on a long-term basis, there are regular visits from British ELT specialists based in UK. A number of these are brought to France by the British Council (forty-four in 1985/6 principally to work in the areas of teaching literature and teacher training. Others are invited to give papers at the numerous professional conferences held in France every year (see Section 3).

British materials

British teaching materials (except CALL), are widely used in the private sector, Formation Continue, and higher education. Their use in the secondary system depends on the extent to which they conform to the 'Instructions'.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The United States Information Service (USIS) has an English Language Programs Office (ELPO) which was set up in 1984. It is staffed by an English Teaching Officer. There is a small number of 'assistants' (about eighty in 1985/86) and exchange teachers (fifteen in 1985/6) in French secondary schools; these are the responsibility of the Franco-American Commission. In addition, the Fulbright Foundation pays for about twelve teachers to visit the USA for three months each year.

Direct teaching

The cultural service of the American Embassy gives the American Center in Paris a modest grant, a proportion of which is used for ELT activity.

USIS activity

This is similar to that of the British Council's ELT service, although smaller in scale. In addition, the ELPO distributes Forum magazine free of charge.

American teaching materials

These are not widely used in France.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

UN/Unesco contribution

Tapes on topical subjects discussed in the assemblies in English are available free of charge.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Books, software and hardware

As has already been indicated, British ELT books and software are widely used in tertiary and further education. There may be room for further expansion in

this market. On the other hand, the secondary school market remains small and opportunities are unlikely to increase significantly. The market for British hardware is also unpromising.

Examinations

Because of the nature of the state education system and teaching qualifications, opportunities for British ELT examinations have always seemed limited. Even so there are now twenty-two local centres for the UCLES examinations and interest in British ELT examinations is increasing.

Paid educational services

In general there is little need for such services within the country. The private ELT sector is large and well-established; it has its own procedures. There is some room for increased use of British expertise from Britain, particularly in the provision of in-company business English courses, an area which has already attracted some British-based ELT operations which specialize in this.

Information and advice

Because of the proximity of Britain and the many French people who follow short language course in Britain, there is a well-established network, of which the British Council forms part, for the provision of information and advice.

Services sought in Britain

There is a large exodus to Britain each summer from France. In 1984 it was estimated that about 250,000 young people under the age of eighteen went to Britain; many attended language courses. Recruitment procedures through French agencies are well established. Both the BTA and the British Council offer well-used information services on the availability of language courses in Britain.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

The active writers' associations are Societé des Gens de Lettres and PEN Club International. There are no writers' workshops (writing in English). Similarly, there are no literary societies dedicated to British writers. However specialist writer groups exist within the Societé des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Superieure (SAES) and several bookshops specializing in British/American authors organize readings by these writers. No literary prizes for original work in English are offered, though the Baudelaire Translation Prize is awarded annually to a work of fiction written in English and translated into French during the award year.

More information on local ELT publishing activity can be gleaned from the first paragraph of Section 4 above. The principal local publishers are Armand Colin, Belin, Hatier, Hachette, and Nathan. British publishers active in ELT in France who have full-time representatives there, are Cambridge University Press, Longman and Oxford University Press. Nelson and Heinemann each have a freelance agent.

Local publishing activity is not dependent on foreign publishers. In ELT, Longman have local ties with Arman Colin. In other areas some French

publishers work closely with British literary agents and publishers; these contacts are usually based on habit and/or friendship.

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15. GENERAL STATEMENT

Although English occupies a privileged position among foreign languages in France, there are countercurrents which should not be forgotten. France still considers its own language and culture of major world significance - and rightly so. Thus, while ensuring that France is not disadvantaged in world markets or in access to research by a lack English, the government has recently vigorously defended the French language and 'La Francophonie' and continues to allocate significant resources to the teaching of French as a foreign language. It is also government policy to pursue the goal of 'plurilinguisme' in the teaching of modern languages in France; that is, to increase the number of students studying languages other than English as a first, second or even third foreign language.

Neverthless, the demand for English remains great and the picture is generally encouraging. In the secondary sector, although movement is slow and patchy, there are signs in some regions of a greater willingness at least to consider alternatives to well-established practice. In the universities, bastions of traditional academic values, a few enlightened teachers are beginning to recognize the importance of teaching language use as well as literature and 'civilization'. Greater interest is being shown in IUTs and Grandes Ecoles in the relevance of ESP for their students. The most encouraging developments have taken and continue to take place in adult education where there is a ferment of productive and creative activity. In all these sectors, interest in and respect for current ELT practice in Britain are high.